

A. R. Desai

CHANGING PROFILE OF
RURAL SOCIETY IN INDIA



C. G. Shah (1896-1969)

C. G. Shah, in whose memory, C. G. Shah Memorial Trust has been created, was one of the most profound, persuasive and erudite Marxists in India. He was a pioneer in spreading Marxist ideas in India and influenced a large number of intellectuals, authors, journalists, lawyers, teachers, professors and political workers for many generations. The depth of his understanding of Marxist thought and his noble simplicity and dedicated life evoked respect from the critics of Marxism.

C. G. Shah was born in 1896 in a middle class educated family in Ahmedabad. He had a brilliant academic career. During his school and college days, he mastered the thoughts of eminent democratic thinkers. He also deeply assimilated the rich philosophical and artistic creations of modern Europe. Mastery over Sanskrit language enabled him to study the rich philosophical and literary works of India. After completing a bright academic career, he chose a life of dedicated service to the people, shunning all alluring higher positions in Indian Civil and Educational Services, offered to him because of his academic brilliance. Coming in clash with his family, on two issues viz. job and marriage, he left Ahmedabad and settled in Bombay, as a part-time teacher and subsequently earned his livelihood as freelance Journalist.

C. G. Shah was among the first in India to react to the October Revolution sympathetically. With his rich cultural equipment, he took to Marxism quickly. He was among the first few intellectuals in India, along with S. A. Dange, S. V. Ghatge, Muzaffer Ahmed and few others who became Marxists. From that time, he made mastery of Marxism and dedication to the Socialist movement, his life objective.

C. G. Shah, along with Dange and others, became one of the founders and an eminent pioneer and a leader of Communist Movement in India. During the period of 1920's and 1930's as Philip Spratt, the famous British Communist sent to India points out "Shah was considered rightly the most learned Marxist in Bombay".

C. G. Shah was actively associated with the founding of many progressive, rationalist and anti-imperialist movements and organizations which arose in the twenties. He was one of the founders of the first Birth Control League in India established in Bombay, the Bombay unit of the Independence of India League, of which Jawaharlal Nehru was the President, also of the Bombay Youth League being one of the secretaries along with the late Yusuf Meherally. He also actively functioned in creating cadres for Marxist movement in India. A large number of Left intellectuals and dedicated workers gravitated to Marxism under the impact of C. G. Shah's written and persuasive oral propaganda. His main activity

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**Changing Profile of Rural
Society in India**

Editor

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Changing Profile of Rural Society in India*

In this paper I discuss the changing social relations in rural India, with particular reference to development since the British withdrew after partitioning the country to form the Indian Union and the new state of Pakistan which has now been further fragmented into Pakistan and Bangladesh. My paper restricts its observations to the changing profile of rural society in the Indian Union.

Independence became a great watershed in the history of rural society in the Indian Union. It is not possible in this short paper to examine the impact of the traumatic events on the eve of the Indian independence : the aftermath of World War II, the gigantic uprooting and migrations of millions of rural people across the new borders, extending over Gujarat, Cutch, Rajasthan and Punjab in the north-west and Assam and Bengal in the east as a consequence of Partition and the communal holocaust that preceded and followed it. Nor can I undertake an examination of the merger into the Indian Union of the feudal Indian 'states' which had been preserved by the British under their paramountcy. I draw attention to these only with a view to highlighting the fact that a full analysis of the effects of these events cannot be avoided if the rural transformation that is taking place in the Indian Union is to be correctly comprehended. I will also draw attention to another important set of events of which the significance has been generally underestimated, but whose impact in shaping the rural policies and programmes of the government of the newly emerged Indian Union needs to be taken note of. I refer to the gigantic uprisings of various sections of rural India during World War II and right up to independence. These included tribal revolts, peasant struggles against British

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rule culminating in the setting up of parallel governments (*Patri Sarkars*), movements in the feudal states, and militant struggles against local exploiters, as in the *tebhaga* movement in Bengal, the Telangana movement in the Andhra areas of the then Hyderabad state, the Warli revolts in Thana District of the then Bombay Presidency. These uprisings made a deep impact on the forces working towards changing the profile of the rural social framework which obtained in the Indian Union immediately after Independence. I draw particular attention to these forces because a peculiar silence has been observed about them and their significance in shaping the contours of rural society after Independence.

Having said this, I will go on to discuss the changes that have taken place in Indian rural society as a result of the multi-pronged measures adopted by the central and state governments of the Indian Union to transform agrarian society, politically, economically, socio-institutionally, and culturally. In this connection, it is necessary to highlight one fact : these measures are a part of overall strategy of the Government of Indian Union to reshape Indian society, the strategy described as 'mixed economy' indicative planning. I need not describe the major features of this pattern of planning as contrasted to socialist, central structural planning since I have done this in several earlier studies. I nevertheless mention this fact because I believe that the package of measures adopted in India to transform rural society are not seen in the context of this major strategy, and, as a result, the portrayal of the changing profile of rural society becomes fragmented, a scattered portrait reflected in the broken pieces of a mirror, a kaleidoscopic jumble of partial pictures, undialectically juxtaposed.

I will, at the conclusion of my paper, draw your attention to the implications of a proper comprehension of the significance of the pattern of planning adopted in India. I will do this with a view to emphasizing how this comprehension alone can provide a full understanding of the dynamics of Indian rural society, the tensions and contradictions it is experiencing and the direction in which it is moving.

I will, at this point, briefly describe and discuss the various measures adopted by the Government of India to recontour

rural society and their impact on the evolving profile of Indian rural society, as revealed in various studies.

II

To appreciate the significance of the measures adopted by the Government of the Indian Union, it is necessary to grasp the nature of the major aspects of the normative-legal framework provided by the Constitution of the Indian Union which became the matrix within which the measures adopted to reshape rural society were conceived and implemented and the spirit in which they were articulated.

Shorn of its massive verbiage, the central normative core of the constitution can be summed up in five major points :

1. The constitution, in spite of all amendments and verbal nuances, accepts the norms of bourgeois society as the permeating principle underlying all its measures. It treats the right to property as fundamental — hard core right — as the bedrock of the entire endeavour to reconstruct Indian economy.

2. It recognizes, and validates legal norms and legislation based on, the right to income through ownership, viz. profit, rent and interest. This has been accepted not merely as proper and just, but as a guiding principle to induce economic development.

3. It does not accept the right to work as fundamental. It has, in fact, accepted the view that labour-power is a commodity, to be used and paid for at rates determined basically by market forces and considerations of profits for employers who produce for market ('supply and demand', 'ability to pay').

4. Compensation to the proprietor for acquisition of his property for public purposes, however qualified, is laid down as a basic norm, but not the principle of compensating those whose labour power is not utilized and not permitted to be utilized, even if the seller of the labour power wants to place it at the disposal of society for augmenting production. There is no assurance of work, minimum wages for work, continuity of work, or compensation for loss of source of livelihood even when society can supply no alternative source. In short, profit, production for the market, and the treatment of labour power as

a commodity permeates the normative value system of the Indian constitution.

5. By accepting the major economic, social and legal codes (civil, criminal and other) and by accepting the basic bureaucratic administrative structure and principles of the bourgeois British administration as the corner-stone of its socio-economic, politico-administrative and legal norms, the Indian constitution has clearly accepted the norms and legal premises of capitalist society as the underlying guiding objective of reconstruction and development of Indian society.

In a short article it is not possible to make a detailed analysis of the various sections of the constitution to highlight how it is permeated, through and through, with the value premises of a capitalist social order. This demands a separate, exhaustive study, a task unfortunately somehow ignored by social scientists. Politicians and administrators do the best they can to screen this truth behind a smokescreen of talk about socialism and welfare.

Numerous measures were adopted by Government after Independence and these have had many-sided effects on all aspects of rural life and ushered in complex transformative processes. I will first describe the major categories of these measures and will later review their impact as revealed by a large number of studies of the pattern of change that they have generated in rural society.

1 Measures to reshape the political life of rural people

i. *Introduction of universal franchise* : This single measure has generated an awareness among people in all corners of India. Elections to panchayats, state legislatures, and parliament have generated profound ferment in rural India, have exposed the rural populace to a wide variety of propaganda campaigns. This activity has engendered various social currents, organisations and associations. The massive ocean of rural population has, since independence, when their votes are being sought, been repeatedly exposed to the phenomena of polling booths, varied political parties, publicity campaigns, lectures, speeches, demonstrations, processions, as well as discussion of various political views and ideologies. This is historically an

entirely new experience for the vast bulk of them and the frequency of this exposure at various levels has had far-reaching consequences in shaping the political profile of rural India after independence.

ii. *Measures to evolve a new bureaucratic-administrative machine* : This comprises a 'Law and Order' wing and a 'Welfare' (?) wing [educational units, primary health centres, rural development organizations staffed by a hierarchy ranging from village level worker (gram sevak) to block development officers]. The very process of evolving the organizational structure — recruitment, training of personnel, laying down conditions of work and inter-relationships among various categories, positions and statuses in the new set-up, and the basic relationship between this administrative-bureaucracy and elected bodies and to people in general — all these had far-reaching effects on the contours of rural society.

iii. *Introduction of panchayat raj* : This again is based on universal adult franchise, and was meant to provide a basic unit of government in rural India.

I will not refer to numerous other political measures. The three I have discussed above were the basic ones, which had a far-reaching impact on rural life in India.

2. Measures to transform the rural economy

A. *Extension and improvement of agricultural techniques* :

These comprise (i) reclamation of certain lands for cultivation; (ii) making more and more land cultivable and productive; (iii) providing more and more facilities for irrigation through construction of wells, tanks, canals, and major and minor irrigation projects (some of them multi-purpose); (iv) setting up of experimental stations, research centres, agricultural colleges and universities; (v) production of improved seeds, fertilizers, tools and insecticides; (iv) expansion of roads, railway tracks and other means of transport for movement of goods and people, thereby meshing rural economic activities into the larger web of national and international economic operations; (vii) creation of institutional credit facilities and facilities for supply of other inputs in the countryside.

All these measures tended to improve the technique of production and to gear it more and more to market sales. The process culminated in certain areas in what is called the 'Green Revolution', selected later on as 'Intensive Development Blocks' operating on the principle of the application of a package of inputs.

B. Measures of land reforms :

i. Taking over estates of intermediaries (zamindars, talukdars and others) : These estates barring certain properties such as homefarm lands, homesteads and some others, on the basis of payment of compensation.

ii. Placing of limitations on future acquisition of lands by certain classes of people.

iii. Tenancy reforms designed to reduce rents, give security to tenants against eviction, and give them also an opportunity to acquire permanent rights over the land by them by payment of fixed compensation, subject to the landlord's right to a certain amount of land for personal cultivation.

iv. Restriction on sale and mortgage, letting and sub-letting of lands.

C. Protection from the oppression of creditors :

i. Numerous measures to regulate private money-lending.

ii. Measures to scale down debts etc.

iii. Measures to legislatively eliminate bonded labour, thereby endeavouring to eliminate some of the semi-feudal patterns of servitude.

3. Measures for all-round development of rural areas

Establishment of an extensive network of community development blocks and elaboration of an extensively ramified system of national extension services with broad development objectives.

4. Measures for reshaping of the associational framework

i. Establishment of vikas mandals, mahila mandals, youth organisations, cultural associations (including bhajan mandals),

gaon or gram (village) panchayats, nyaya panchayats, cooperative societies and others, and stimulating a climate for creating numerous voluntary associations for pursuing various objectives, with a view to assisting the process of transforming the associational framework in the rural areas from a semi-feudal one based on ascriptive to one based on the modern achieving system, theoretically open to all.

ii. Establishment of a chain of primary health centres to look after health, prevention and cure of diseases, and to inculcate a new sense of hygiene. These centres are also utilized as the chief vehicles for spreading the idea of family planning and provide contraceptive advice and contraceptives.

iii. Establishment of a network of primary and secondary schools and the induction of the personnel connected with them. Installation of various mass communication devices like radios, television sets, libraries to broaden the cultural horizons of rural people.

5. Assistance to small-scale and cottage industries

The measures adopted by the government have left a deep imprint on rural life and have brought about profound and varied changes in the 27 years since independence in political life, economic processes, class and caste stratification, social and institutional life and also in the cultural gestalt of rural populace. Their impact on different classes and different castes have been varied and contradictory and have created very poignant problems and grave social tensions in rural India. The massive literature surveying and analyzing this multisided transformation includes studies by the Reserve Bank, and numerous other public agencies, government-sponsored surveys and analytical works, and comprehensive evaluatory studies by both foreign and Indian scholars. I need not list these studies since they are now well known and have been fully documented in numerous trend reports published by the Indian Council of Social Science Research. I will highlight only a few of the most significant findings which will indicate the changing pattern.

III

A. *Success in increasing foodgrains production :*

The endeavours of the Government of India to increase foodgrains production have, to some extent, succeeded, in comparison

with what used to be during the British regime. Production has increased from about 45 million tons in 1947 to 100-107 tons in 1970. It is now (1977) estimated to have increased to 125-130 million tons. However, this growth has many features which are causing apprehension about the maintenance of this rate of production in the future. The growth has been lop-sided, achieved only in the case of certain crops and dependent on the application of certain major inputs, including adequate water supply. Further, increased production has been achieved by only restricted sections of the agricultural population mainly cultivating landlords and rich farmers (described by the Balvantrai committee as 'progressive') possessing landholdings and other equipment in quantities adequate to make agriculture a profit-yielding enterprise, one whose objective is to produce for the market.

To achieve this increase in production, government had to provide an elaborate infrastructure and inducements in terms of tax exemptions, provision of inputs like improved seeds and fertilizers at subsidized prices and an assurance of purchase of the produce at certain minimum prices. The agrarian entrepreneurs are thus persuaded to augment production by the prospect of earning a substantial profit. Special trade and marketing facilities were also provided to facilitate flow of produce from one area to another (where higher prices might prevail).

The transformation of agrarian production, of both food and non-food (commercial) crops into commodities for the market, has almost wholly eliminated the old system of barter, and the spirit underlying payment in kind wherever it persists, thereby denying the vast numbers of poor peasants, uneconomic farmers, agricultural labourers and ruined rural artisans, who have extremely meagre or no purchasing power, access to goods previously available to them. They are now forced to incur debts or accept backdoor semi-serf tenurial situations and dispose of their labour at sweated wages to earn the money required to buy their food and other necessities at high prices.

Thus while agricultural production has grown faster since Independence than during British rule, the growth has been achieved at the cost of allowing a small class of landlords and rich farmers to strengthen itself while massive sections of the

rural population are condemned to growing deterioration in the quality of their lives, to insecurity and a stress of rapid pauperization and proletarianization. The spectre of a red revolution chasing the green one as a result of this process is haunting those planning for rural economic growth on the basis of reliance on the proprietary classes for improving agricultural production. Numerous reports, official and non-official, have drawn attention to this possibility. Since the government is unwilling to change the thrust of its agrarian policies, it naturally relies on the support of the rich and proprietary classes to contain the protests and struggles of the strata whose conditions are deteriorating and who aspire to transforming agrarian relations in their favour through their struggles.

B. Reshuffling of class relations in the countryside

The Government policy of elimination of rural intermediaries, or what is called zamindari abolition, took the form of land reforms in all the states of the Indian Union. The taking over of the estates of zamindars and absentee landlords was carried out on the basis of payment of compensation to the landlords by the tenants before they could secure ownership rights to the land they were tilling. This constituted a basic limitation on the possibility of transfer of land from non-cultivating to cultivating classes. Only those rich tenants who could pay the compensation could acquire ownership rights. The poorer sections of cultivating tenants, who could not afford to pay compensation, were either forced to borrow money for acquiring ownership or were denied ownership and, at the same time, lost tenurial security and became non-owning proletariat or back-door tenants, operating under conditions of increasing insecurity and under various obligations and subordination to the proprietors of land they rented. Further, the provisions of the legislations enacted in different states, with varying definitions of the concept of 'tillers' of the land, and extent of holdings the landlords were permitted to retain for so-called 'personal cultivation', hurled the countryside into the vortex of a gigantic churning up of the proprietary classes. It sliced off a tip of the old landowning classes, those that owned enormous estates, and incorporated a small upper section of the tenants in the land-owning group, thus creating a broader strata of landowners which would actively take interest in developing agriculture on capitalist lines. The measures also created a

host of problems around title-deeds, amount of compensation, transfer of ownership, type and quality of land to be retained by landowners for 'personal' cultivation, etc. They also generated a process of poorer tenants and sub-tenants being hurled into the bottomless pit of proletarianization, and, in the context of overpressure on agriculture and lack of alternative occupations, being forced to undertake new kinds of bonded labour rooted, not in the feudal form of subsistence production, but in the emerging profit-oriented market and monetized commodity production associated with the growing capitalist economy in India.

Most studies on the impact of land reforms and land ceiling legislation have drawn attention to this regrouping of classes. A very small number of very large landowners (absentee zamindars, absentee money-lenders and the top layers of the landlords) have been dispossessed with payment of compensation. A class of relatively smaller landlords, rich farmers emerging out of richer sections of the tenants, and a small section of upper-middle peasants, who also became traders and creditors, has emerged, thus broadening the base of the rural proprietary classes actively connected with agriculture. On the other hand, a vast number of tenants and small farmers have been transformed into either proprietors of uneconomic holdings, becoming more and more dependent on the richer classes as time passes and ultimately being forced to lease their land to them; or proletarianized tenants who cling to their land, without the earlier security of tenure ultimately to be hurled into the category of agricultural labourers.

The following figures give a broad all-India picture of the class structure which has emerged in the Indian countryside after 25 years of independence :

1. The class of rich farmers and landlords owning 15 acres and more and possessing 50% of the total land constitute 7% of the population.

2. Middle farmers owning between 5 and 15 acres of land and possessing 30% of the total land constitute 19% of the population.

3. Poor farmers carrying on deficit farming, owning between 1 to 5 acres and possessing 17% of the total land constitute 30% of the rural population.

4. Agricultural labour, without land or owning less than one acre of land, possess about 2% of the total land and constitute 44% of the total population.

This very rough outline of class structure does not reveal its grim implications, the actual complex and horrifying picture. When viewed in the context of type of lands, dry and wet, this configuration will be seen to be still more unfavourable.

In short, post-independence measures to reshuffle the class configuration in rural India, taken in the name of 'elimination of intermediaries', 'abolition of zamindari' and 'land to the tiller', have in practice performed a dual function :

(i) By cutting to size the holdings of the big landlords and elevating the richer sections of tenants into the owner group, they have broadened the base of the proprietary classes comprising landlords and rich farmers, who were induced to take active interest in developing agricultural production for profit and augment production on the basis of a cold calculus of maximizing this profit.

(ii) By depriving large sections of the poorer tenants of their tenurial security and steadily depriving them of their land, these tenants, operating on shrinking pieces of land, which transforms them increasingly into marginal farmers, back-door tenants or bond slaves of a new type (legally not recognised as bond slaves, but economically forced to operate in this manner for want of either land or other occupations). The process of proletarianization and pauperization has steadily accelerated, resulting in more than three-fourths of the rural population being proletarianized, and, in the context of pressure on land, being transformed into a massive reserve army of underutilized, partly utilized or unemployed labour.

It is necessary to clearly understand the scenario of this emerging class-configuration in rural India for reasons which I will now discuss.

(1) This new rural class configuration is evolving as a direct consequence of government measures aimed at altering the class structure of rural society.

(2) The strengthening and broadening through this policy of the rural base of the proprietary classes is a part of a

deliberate strategy of development. To deceive the public, its real purpose is concealed and issues confused by a cacophony of high sounding, pompous, but deceptive propaganda about 'establishing equality', 'welfare of the masses' and 'a policy of all-round progress' pompously designated 'modernisation'. While talking about 'growth with justice' and 'fair distribution', values favourable to the profit-chasing, exploiting landowning and rich farmer classes are subtly inculcated, by creating an image of them as 'progressive', 'forward looking', 'modernizers' and 'change agents'. While a gigantic game of makebelieve is being played with the public about government ushering in a 'socialistic pattern of society', and expansion of the 'public sector' as a step in the direction of socialism, the basic measures adopted by the government — setting up an elaborate administrative law and order structure; provision of credit, tax reliefs or incentives; adoption of favourable price policies; provision of technical skills and know-how; provision of various categories of inputs; provision of an elaborate infrastructure of transport, communication, and also an institutional and associational framework — strengthen and encourage these proprietary classes, who are, in fact, reshaping Indian rural economy on capitalist, profit-pursuing, market-oriented lines.

(3) This transformation of the class-system has ushered in intense competition — economic, social and cultural — among various sections of the newly emerging proprietary classes. They are engaged in a fierce struggle to secure for themselves larger slices of the benefits and facilities so generously provided by the government. While busy fighting among themselves and competing for government's favours, these classes have simultaneously to contend with the demands and struggles of the rural masses that are being steadily pauperized and proletarianized and adopt various techniques to contain, divide, confuse, discipline and repress them.

It is unfortunate that the competition among sections of the prosperous classes and the methods they adopt to deal with mass demands and struggles are either left unexamined or not examined as the logical outcome of the pattern of planning accepted by the ruling classes for economic development. The contradictions between professed intention and the actual results of policies pursued are explained away as failures in implementation, the result of individual corruption, the consequence of the hold of tradition or custom and outdated

caste superstitions or other irrational practices, or the opposition of the semi-feudal landlords.

(4) The changing rural class configuration has generated a vast ferment among those who are being increasingly deprived of their land, their tenurial security and of the crumbs they received in kind under the customary relations based on barter and production for subsistence. For these persons the rapidly emerging market-oriented, money-based, competitive economy and production based on capitalist norms and rationality is a tightening noose on their necks, and is generating movements among them to counteract these processes. They are searching for ways to break through the tightening bonds that are stifling them. However, these assertions are being viewed as unhealthy, irrational, impertinent, harmful and even dangerous. It is held that they create obstacles or even operate as disruptive forces in the process of modernization and in the development of the economy and society through implementation of the mixed-economy indicative planning of the ruling classes in India.

Thus, the emerging class-configuration in rural India provides a clear picture of the basic classes—the main role players—shaping the social profile of rural India.

C. Changing caste configurations in rural India

The 27 years since Independence have seen a tremendous transformation in the structure, function and the very gestalt of the Indian caste system, a system of stratification unique to this country.

Since independence, in consonance with the principles underlying the constitution, recruitment to positions in government and organized private services has been based essentially on achievement rather than ascription and the norms of the emerging profit-oriented market economy, on competition in every field. This development has eliminated the basic gestalt of caste system and the forces behind them have transformed castes into competing associations, each mobilizing caste resources, pooling economic and other caste assets, creating favourable conditions for the education of its members, supporting caste candidates in elections, enhancing the bargaining power of the castes and broadening its base by merging sub-castes with it and organizing caste bodies at regional, state and all-

India levels to participate in various economic, political and cultural activities. The eruption of caste organizations, and their intense activities in various sectors of the emerging economy and in the political processes, can be explained only if it is understood that castes are becoming competing associations, adapting themselves to the emerging new pattern of economy and polity.

The nature and extent of changes in the rural caste configuration under the impact of various measures adopted by government are now becoming clear and some major features of the change are now discussed.

(1) The position of certain castes — Brahmins, certain categories of Rajputs, Kayasthas and others — is weakening and certain intermediate castes, comprised of those directly linked with agriculture, have strengthened. For instance, Marathas in Maharashtra, Patidars in Gujarat and Jats, Ahirs, Kunbis, Bhumihars, Reddis, Nayars, Vokkaligas and others in other states, have acquired new strength after Independence. It must be noted further that, among these newly strengthened castes, a polarization is taking place — a small segment of each of these castes is becoming prosperous while the rest are being steadily pauperized and proletarianized and thus, objectively, joining the ranks of similar categories from other castes.

The dominant, prosperous sections of the intermediate castes that improved their situation since Independence are strengthening their associations and are uniting to win elected posts, for places in institutions providing professional education and for jobs demanding a certain minimum level of academic performance. They are taking over a number of functions like provision of credit, moneylending and trading, from rival castes and are uniting with other castes sharing their interests whenever necessary to fight elections to panchayats and in legislatures; to further their trade, commercial and agricultural interests; to press for increased recruitment of caste members to the services and for cultural-educational opportunities.

(2) The lower castes, who also overwhelmingly constitute those on the lowest economic rungs, are also affected by the operation of the new economic and political processes and are also trying to regroup themselves to compete for perquisites

that will help them raise their social status. They are also evolving defensive organisations by pooling their resources to counteract the adverse impact of economic and political processes. The measures adopted by government to provide some selective preferential facilities and opportunities to backward and scheduled castes and tribals, in elections, in education, in recruitment to the services, have enabled a tiny section of some of the lower castes to climb the ladder to the level of intermediate and higher castes. One of the peculiarities of emerging caste configuration lies in the fact that small richer sections of the upper, intermediate and lower castes are attaining middle and upper class status in the countryside, while the majority of members of all castes are being steadily pushed into pauperdom and proletarianization, with inadequate employment prospects. While the proportion of higher castes and intermediating cultivating castes falling in the land owning, rich farmer and service and professional classes is large and these castes form the main reservoir for recruitment of new entrants into the middle and upper classes, only a trickle comes from the lower castes. Similarly, while the process of pauperization and proletarianization is taking place in all castes, it is overwhelmingly from the scheduled castes and the scheduled tribes and backward castes and communities.

3. The impact of government's specific legislation and measures for the 'abolition of the caste system' and of the wider plans, policies and measures for social and economic development, has been responsible for the creation of a bizarre, complicated spectacle of diverse and contradictory trends and forces. On one side there is a realignment of political, social and economic power among upper and intermediate castes, with the emergence of upper proprietary classes and modern service seeking professional middle classes. Sections of these emerging classes do not hesitate to utilize their caste situation to bargain with government to compete with rivals, to prevent their own pauperized caste-fellows from uniting with others in a similar situation belonging to other castes. They play upon caste sentiments, whip up prejudices against other castes, and generate false hopes among their poorer caste brethren that their economic, political and educational situation can improve if they back the rich caste leaders in pursuing profits, and securing posts in the services. We thus witness a peculiar dialectic process of emerging modern capitalist classes utilizing caste associations, caste combinations, caste practices, caste sentiments and caste resou-

ances for gaining their non-caste, class, economic, political, social and educational objectives. In fact, castes transformed into competing associations as stated at the opening of this discussion, and impregnated with the new bourgeois value system, have become powerful levers wielded by the proprietary classes to carry on competition among themselves and to divide the pauperized and proletarianized classes in rural society. The value system underlying the caste hierarchy, fundamentally one based on inequality supplements the value system of the bourgeois order, and thus provides the bourgeoisie with a powerful ideological weapon against the advocates of the unity of all toiling, exploited, non-owning classes of all castes in the struggle against exploitation under the emerging 'capitalist politico-economic social order'. This powerful, pro-proprietary class function of caste values and caste organizations is not properly appreciated. As long as these changes in the gestalt and the changed functions of the caste system are not comprehended, and as long as numerous dilemmas of contemporary Indian Society are wrongly attributed to the caste system, endeavours to eliminate it will not only fail but will also divert our attention from locating the real causes of its persistence — the dovetailing of castes with the emerging class-configuration, a consequence of economic and political development under planning based on a 'mixed' economy.

D. Changing associational patterns of rural society

As observed earlier the government has undertaken a number of measures to evolve new types of associations, some of which are technically open, accessible to all, and others admitting members on the basis of qualifications or election. A complex network of officially sponsored village associations, vikas mandals, mahila mandals, youth organizations, cultural associations, gaon panchayats, co-operative societies, kisan sabhas, and numerous voluntary associations, pursuing various objectives have emerged in rural areas. A chain of administrative offices and functionaries from the village level workers (gram sevaks and gram sevikas), operators of primary health centres and primary school teachers and then upwards, has also come into existence. The emergence and spread of associations on a big scale are distinctly a post-Independence phenomena, partly the result of the efforts of the government, both at the centre and in the states, and partly as a result of numerous political, economic, educational and other forces generated by the new economic

and political framework which has emerged as a result of the type of development planning pursued in this country.

Numerous studies have revealed the nature of membership, type of leadership, and the functions and interests which these associations serve in the countryside. It has been found that, barring certain class organizations of agricultural workers and kisan sabhas, the organizations are either manned or controlled by the landowning and rich-farmer classes. The posts for which educational qualifications are necessary, are generally filled by candidates coming from the proprietary classes, who in turn generally come from upper or newly strengthened intermediate castes. Elections to panchayat committees, zilla parishads, managing bodies of co-operative societies and to posts of office-bearers like sarpanchas are generally cornered by the same classes. A trickle of persons belonging to lower and backward classes and women may hold only the seats specifically reserved for them within these associations. Needless to say, these associations are generally utilized to subserve the interests of newly strengthened proprietary classes.

It should, however, be noted that the organizational complex is of a new type. It has generated a novel type of ferment in the rural areas, having both evoked and distorted a new consciousness appropriate to a system based on competition for securing positions of control over these organizations. It has made it necessary for the proprietary class to stand for elections, approach electorates and cultivate constituencies. It has also emphasized the importance of education and the need to acquire educational and professional qualifications which have become essential for appointment to even the lowest rungs of offices created in countryside. Though the operations of economic laws, generated as a consequence of plans, have strengthened and augmented the resources of the richer classes in the countryside, fierce competition has been let loose among various segments of these classes for securing control over the associations, which are the new instruments for retaining and augmenting their gains. This has made it necessary for them to approach the lower classes and to gain support against their rivals in elections and also to contain and control these classes through acquiring leadership of their associations.

The lower strata, under the impact of new political, economic and other forces, are becoming aware of the true nature of

their problems and have gained a new sense of realization that they have to compete to secure jobs and benefits; they are recognizing the role of the new organizations in shaping their life and are striving to gain leadership and control of some of them. However, the economic dependence of the pauperized and proletarianized strata, their lack of skills and education (denied to them, due to their inability to command resources), broadly tend to make them pawns in the struggles between competing sections of the proprietary classes for control of these multi-class associations. Frustrated in their efforts to gain command in the associations, the impoverished sections develop anomic reactions of various kinds so vividly classified by Professor R. K. Merton in his discussion social structure and anomie.

The economic and political problems of the pauperized peasantry, the agricultural proletariat and the ruined artisans can be handled only if they build class organizations which would champion their causes, develop struggles on specific and general issues affecting them, and which constitute an alternative associational framework of political power to counteract and replace the presently evolving associations and political framework favourable to the richer rural strata.

The rural areas have witnessed the emergence of such organizations, political groupings and parties at local, regional and all-India levels. Further, the rural have-nots have, from time to time, launched movements — often defensive, inadequately organized and based on wrong strategies — taking various shapes but always asserting a new determination to fight back and escape the ever-tightening noose put round their necks by the newly operating economy and polity. These organizations and struggles doubtless emerge and operate under tremendous difficulties — the hostile atmosphere, lack of resources and the multipronged manoeuvres of the ruling classes to prevent, distort, confuse and repress them.

Rural India is thus being enmeshed in a new pattern of associations and institutions, the overwhelming majority of them subserving the needs of the new proprietary classes and most of them manned by personnel recruited from these classes. The powerful role of these multi-class organizations in strengthening the emerging proprietary classes, the main agents of change in the adopted pattern of economic development needs to be properly understood. It must also be noted that these associations

are buttressed, encouraged, protected and often-times financed by the state, the active agent of planning aimed at inducing the proprietary classes to augment production, building an appropriate associational framework for their developmental activities and at reshaping the social framework in the countryside in a manner that would facilitate economic development on mixed-economy lines. It must also be remembered that the growth of organizations in the form of various class organizations, both economic and political, and movements launched by the growing classes of poor farmers, agricultural labourers, and ruined artisans are generally frowned upon, discouraged, controlled and curbed on the excuse that they obstruct economic development. With the growing resentment and discontent among the exploited and oppressed masses being increasingly reflected in desperate bids to launch various movements and build class associations (economic and political) which would challenge the emerging politico-economic set-up, the government and the emerging proprietary classes are combining to evolve ideological, legal, coercive and associational measures to curb or suppress the movements and class associations of the lower classes. Since the second decade after World War II described as the Decade of Despair for third world countries, these devices of the state and the ruling classes have acquired greater force and became almost their central activity in the seventies, appropriately described as the Decade of Discontent and Turmoil.

Changes in the associational pattern of rural society in India during last two and half decades since Independence reveal these complex currents and deepening conflicts among and between the newly emerging proprietary classes and the pauperized and proletarianized toiling masses. They also reveal how the new associational framework, encouraged and supported by government, is operating as an instrument in the service of the new category of rich proprietary agents of development.

6. Emerging profile of cultural changes

It is not possible in this paper to provide even an outline of the changes that are taking place in the cultural life of rural India. However, various studies reveal certain distinct features which may be noted.

1. Competitive and acquisitive values, and the rationality of the capitalist market economy are increasingly replacing the

semifeudal traditional values of subsistence and barter economy. Calculation based on the cash nexus, and profit as the goal, increasingly permeates economic relations in rural India.

2. Achievement norms based on securing positions through election or competition are increasingly replacing the ascriptive norms which prevailed earlier. This normative framework which was introduced by the British has been spreading very fast in rural areas since Independence. However distorted it might be by caste, religious and other considerations, it is shaping the political processes of the country.

3. Under the operations of economic and political processes initiated as part of the planning adopted by government a network of institutions is emerging which operates on the principle of bourgeois individualist value and norms and which try to rationalize various activities in the spirit of these norms.

4. However, the proprietary classes, though gaining strength in India, are vulnerable in the context of the decline of capitalism on a global scale, and the emergence of a new social order based on a non-capitalist, socialist framework in almost one third of the world. They are therefore haunted by the fear of being overthrown and extinction by the non-owning classes, whom Marx rightly characterized as grave-diggers of capitalist social order.

Further the ruling class is aware that a new awakening is taking place among the poor. They are demanding that they should be given jobs, adequate purchasing power, education and the means of satisfying their basic needs. The ruling class is becoming increasingly aware that it will not be able to provide or meet these demands within the present system. This they know both from the experience of other countries and an appreciation of their own economic limitations. They are, therefore, forced to elaborate a series of myths to divert the attention of the masses from the real cause of their poverty—the capitalist system. For the same reason they elaborate value and belief systems, remedies and solutions, which they hope will somehow or other divert the attention of the masses from the real cause of their malady and lead them to seek solutions for their problems in directions other than the uprooting of the capitalist socio-economic framework.

While capitalist rationality is ruthlessly pursued with regard to economic operations, confusing, obscurantist, casteist, religious and other-worldly values are propagated among the masses through the radio, television, press, institutions and associations and by pressing into service an entire army of professionals vending ethical, religious and spiritual values - the sadhus, sanyasins, and heads and staff of various religious organizations and temples. The Government of India itself consciously presses this category of persons into service for the ideological remoulding of the masses. The proprietary classes spend massive sums to support such people and to this end elaborate various institutional devices in the form of charities and trusts; they patronize the activities of these propagators of so-called ethical-spiritual preachings through press, publications, kathas, mass gatherings, melas and celebrations of infinite varieties of religious festivals which often acquire bizarre proportions, specially in the Hindu religion. Government itself actively sponsors bhajan mandlis, sadhu samajas and other forms of religious associations.

The Indian cultural climate is thus being permeated by two distinct types of content. In economic and political operations, the norms and values of bourgeois rationality are encouraged; in the social and cultural fields and in the area of providing alternate world view, the other-worldly, non-rationalist, non-militant, non-class, mystical, superstitious, religious, obscurantist value system is systematically fostered.

It is interesting to note that this dualistic value, and, normative system eminently serves the proprietary classes both in pursuing their economic and political interests and in confusing and distorting the perceptions and analysis of the masses, and preventing them from locating the real sources of their woes in the type of socio-economic order which is being built in India. Rural India is replete with these cultural currents. They take many forms and manifest themselves in various movements and in the emergence of varied cults taking on many ideological organizational and propaganda forms, but which all perform one major function : preventing the exploited classes from tracing the true source of their misery.

7. Conclusion

I have briefly described the changing profile of rural India. The emerging profile is alarming, creating adverse conditions

for the vast mass of rural population and raising a spectre of more agonized, more insecure, and more pauperized existence. This profile also reveals how a peculiar type of class and caste configuration is emerging in rural India, where advantages are showered on the newly emerging class of landlords and rich farmers by pauperizing and proletarianizing the mass of rural poor. Government measures are actively shaping this profile in pursuance of its basic strategy of economic growth and modernization through mixed-economy indicative planning.

The Indian countryside is becoming a vast cauldron of boiling lava of tensions, antagonisms and conflicts. Can solutions favourable to the vast mass of the poor in rural areas be found within the framework of the present strategy of economic development? History does not provide a single instance of exploiting classes surrendering power to the exploited masses through a change of heart. I therefore urge scholars to consider the implication of the changing profile of rural India and its implications for the future of Indian economy and society.

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Bourgeois Agrarian Strategy- Need for a New Approach

It is urgently necessary that all those genuinely interested in the liberation of the masses in India from the yoke and the tyranny of capital should develop a fundamentally new understanding of the agrarian strategy of the Indian bourgeois state, an understanding different from that of the leaders of the Praja Socialist Party (PSP), the Socialist Party (SP) and the Communist Party of India (CPI). Faulty appraisals and wrong assessments by the leaders of these parties have created tremendous confusion among the masses, have generated a feeling of frustration among them, have prevented the exploited classes and oppressed masses from building effective class organizations and genuine anti-capitalist mass organizations and have directed their discontent into futile or wasteful channels of protest, thus ultimately helping the Indian bourgeoisie and their state to successfully build an economic order, political machinery, social institutions and a cultural-ideological climate to subserve their basic interest and to weaken, disrupt and suppress the united struggles of the proletariat and other toiling masses of India.

The Agrarian Tasks Confronting the Indian Bourgeoisie after Independence

After securing power from the British imperialists, the Indian bourgeoisie, basically through its state power but assisted by other instruments at its command, has been making powerful efforts to reshape Indian agrarian economy and society to suit its own bourgeois needs. The tasks have been herculean, the path has been strewn with innumerable hurdles : obstruction of bourgeois development by feudal-imperialist survivals from the days of British rule; and the need, at least partially, to respond to the rising aspirations of the masses and classes lest they went on from ending foreign rule to ending capitalism

itself, the basic source of their miseries. It has to elaborate an economic policy which will generate forces in the agrarian economy conducive to the development of productive forces and production on the basis of private enterprise, the profit motive and production for the market, i. e. it has to create conditions in which rich peasants and their complementary groups can carry on such production. It has to elaborate and organize associations and institutions which will enable the newly emerging class of prosperous, profit-oriented, rich peasants to gain command over economic, political, social and cultural life in the rural areas, thus transforming the agrarian power-structure in such a manner that real power shifted from old consumption-oriented semi-feudal and interest-oriented money-lending strata to the strata interested in improved production for profit and for the market. It has to evolve a subtle, powerful, ideological propaganda campaign to delude the masses into believing that what it was doing for the bourgeoisie and rich peasants was in the fundamental interests of the masses and also making them believe that the conditions of the masses can be improved only within the matrix of the exploitative capitalist system.

The Indian Bourgeoisie Elaborate Their Agrarian Strategy

The strategy adopted by the Indian bourgeoisie to perform these tasks has been implemented through the five year plans. Through its political agency, the state, it has launched various measures of land-reform aimed at reshuffling class-relationships in agrarian areas. It introduced measures to provide technical and other facilities like irrigation, improved seeds, fertilizers to regenerate the productive capacities of agriculture. It has introduced various financial, taxation, credit and marketing measures to subserve the needs of those sections of agrarian society which are induced by the availability of these facilities to produce for the market and profit. It has launched schemes to create social, political, cultural and economic institutions to strengthen the position, power of the richer sections of the peasantry and the trading class through which it is initiating the process of capital formation and of reshaping of agrarian production and the rural social order.

The Indian bourgeoisie and its state are, however, adopting agrarian programmes under the slogan of building a socialistic pattern. They are implementing bourgeois programmes while

getting them accepted as measures in the interests of the masses. They are clothing them with slogans of democracy, freedom and fundamental values like the dignity of man, sarvodaya, spiritual elevation, decentralization of power etc. They have thus successfully created an impression in the minds of even the leaders of various left parties that these measures are really in the interest of the masses.

The Uniqueness of the Indian Bourgeoisie

The Indian bourgeoisie is unique among the bourgeoisie of underdeveloped countries in as much as it has been able to evolve a most complex and sophisticated ideological screen to cloak its real intentions. During the British period, it elaborated a complex, ethically loaded theory of non-violence, during the very period when it was bargaining with and bringing pressure on the foreign rulers to transfer state power, the instrument of class violence, to itself. It talked of democratic mass movements, but elaborated organs of struggle which were always headed by selected dictators. It was pledged to a life and death struggle for a united India, but did not hesitate to accept partition on communal lines to secure power for itself when it apprehended that the united mass movements of peasants, workers, army, navy and others to overthrow British rule might result in also overthrowing capitalism itself. It enunciated the slogans of Liberty, Equality and Brotherhood, but worked out a constitution which declared private property sacrosanct, a fundamental right while the right to work was proclaimed as a mere pious wish and labour-power treated as a mere commodity. It included in the Constitution a large number of fundamental rights, but hedged them with so many 'ifs and buts' that they could be negated whenever the bourgeoisie wished. It has devised a constitution under which government can carry on under a facade of democracy even when it is, in reality, functioning as a dictatorship through the Defence of India Rules or ordinances. It has undertaken economic planning which it claims is aimed at realizing a socialistic pattern, while, in practice, it strengthens and enriches the bourgeoisie in a manner unparalleled in the past. It constantly talks about the improvement of the conditions of the downtrodden peasantry and ruined artisans and of establishing a golden age of village democracy, while in practice it has been implementing an agrarian policy which is increa-

singly making the economy, polity and social institutions of the villages subservient to the needs of bourgeois industrialization through creating a strong strata of rich peasants and powerful trading groups who are increasingly transforming the agrarian areas into a gigantic source of capital formation through the profit-chasing indulged in by the richer sections in the countryside.

The Misinterpretation of Indian Bourgeois Strategy by Left Parties.

Unfortunately, the three left parties which claim to represent the masses, and which have some influence among the working class and masses, are elaborating their strategy of opposition on the assumption that the Indian bourgeoisie, the Indian National Congress (the classic party of the Indian bourgeoisie) and the Indian state (which is the classic executive committee of the Indian bourgeoisie looking after overall Indian bourgeois development), really stand for what they proclaim. All three of these parties, whatever their sources of their erroneous approaches, are today elaborating their strategy of opposition on the major assumption that the Indian National Congress, which heads the 'democratic' state and under Gandhian inspiration, is genuinely struggling to build up a socialistic pattern of society. According to them, the fundamental task of the opposition is to point out errors in the programmes, to urge the revision of those which are in contradiction with the proclaimed aims, to elaborate a programme to combat corruption, and to change the personnel of the government as well as the leadership of the ruling party. All three of these parties are interested in organizing protest movements and pressure struggles to eliminate the disparity between the professed aims and the emerging results of the policies of the classic party of the Indian bourgeoisie. All three parties at present assume that the state structure which has been elaborated by the Indian bourgeoisie is in fact and can work as a neutral institution which can be utilized for both good and evil. All of them assume that the basic task confronting the socialists is to rectify the errors committed by the ruling class. According to them, to pursue this task they should organize various kinds of pressures. They should even include in their programmes attempts at changing the personnel of the central and state governments, and demand association of non-government groups in framing national

policies, and even the formation of a coalition National Government composed of members of different parties or composed of the best men in the country, irrespective of their party affiliations. It is on these assumptions that these parties are conducting their mass movement. These parties are thus engaged only in the task of counteracting ills arising out of the implementation of bourgeois policy, of healing wounds caused by the Indian bourgeois programmes. They are not interested in organizing movements to destroy the perennial source of these evils, the very capitalist structure which is being generated by the Indian bourgeoisie. They do not raise the fundamental question as to whether it is possible to eradicate the symptoms without changing the very structure which is being built by the Indian bourgeoisie. All the three left mass parties have thus come under the spell of the illusion generated by the Indian bourgeoisie. All of them want to appeal to the present ruling class to rectify their errors and to advise it to act consistently with its proclamations. All of them are developing various types of pressure devices, including satyagrahas, processions, strikes, demonstrations and other mass protest movements, to 'rectify', to eliminate some of the 'weaknesses' that have emerged as a result of the policies adopted by the ruling class, headed by the Indian National Congress. All this on the assumption that the Indian bourgeoisie is as sincere about improving the lot of the masses as about its profits.

The Strategy of the PSP

The Praja Socialist Party strategy provides the clearest evidence of this approach. While it has organized some mass struggles, it has not elaborated a single, consistent analysis of the pattern of the economy and society that has been emerging in India under the leadership of the Indian bourgeoisie. Its hatred for class struggles and Marxism is more intense than its indignation against bourgeois policies. Frightened by the prospect of the gigantic battles the exploited classes will have to undertake and shuddering at the idea of socialist revolution, the PSP has followed a consistent policy of compromise, a systematic strategy of class-collaboration, basically subserving the interests of the small bourgeoisie and the upper petty bourgeoisie. It is utilizing its influence among the masses to divert their heroism and energy into futile, spasmodic protest movements. It thus plays the dangerous role of spreading

confusion among the masses. The leadership of the party is gradually moving towards the bourgeois leadership in the hope of developing some sort of partnership with them in running the Indian economy and state.

The SP and Its Strategy

The Socialist Party, which emerged as a movement of revolt against the compromising policies of the PSP, has unfortunately also adopted the same approach as the PSP towards the policies of the Indian bourgeoisie and its state. It condemns the bourgeois Congress government for failing to live up to its professions, for betraying Gandhian ideals. It is developing a movement to expose the Congress Government for its falling from the standards laid down by Mahatma Gandhi, for becoming the instrument of a handful of corrupt politicians. But while it tries to expose the harmful effects of the economic, political, social, cultural, and other policies of the Congress Government, such as growing economic inequalities, emerging corruption etc. it hardly elevates its criticism to a substantial, more fundamental plane. The Socialist Party has no theory of social development beyond some vague notions about the wheel of history. It has no clear analysis of the class pattern of the emerging economy and society. It has hardly anything to offer which can enhance understanding of the role of various classes. It has no image of the future socialist order and road to its establishment. Parliamentary fanfare backed up by a few off hand sensational mass movements undertaken without a long-term strategy are the gifts of this party to the masses. While bolder and less compromising than the PSP, the Socialist Party adopts a strategy of only needling the bourgeoisie, not one that will lead to its destruction as a class.

The CPI : Advisor to the Progressive Wing of the Indian Bourgeoisie :

The Communist Party of India is the most powerful, the best organized of the three parties being discussed. It includes among its members a large number of courageous, dedicated and disciplined persons, but nevertheless plays an even more dangerous role among the masses than the PSP and the SP, because it develops its strategy of mass movements on the basis of a much more clearly formulated theory than either of them and palms off its analysis of the Indian

bourgeoisie and its state as Marxist analysis. The CPI leadership has, basically, evaluated Indian developments through the eyes of the leadership of the Soviet Union. Of late, particularly after the death of Stalin, after the Khrushchev revelations and more particularly after the growing Sino-Soviet rift, the CPI leadership has split into two wings, the majority wing still analysing the strategy of the Indian bourgeoisie and its state from the viewpoint of foreign policy needs of the Khrushchev regime, while the minority wing attempts to evaluate the Indian situation either on the basis of the approaches adopted by the Chinese leadership or to evolve an approach of equal distance from both.

Whatever the conflicts and differences emerging within the CPI, the official leadership, commanding the majority in the organization, is pro-Russian, pro-Khrushchev, and has evolved a peculiar analysis of the economy, polity, class structure and class struggles that are emerging in India after the withdrawal of British rule. It divides the Indian bourgeoisie into a progressive, anti-imperialist section and reactionary, pro-imperialist section. It proclaims that the progressive wing of the bourgeoisie can lead the country in the accomplishment of anti-feudal, anti-imperialist bourgeois democratic tasks, including the task of creating a prosperous peasant economy by destroying the feudal-imperialist shackles that hinder its emergence. Implicit in its analysis is a belief that the state which emerged after the imperialists withdrew is a peculiar 'amphibian' supra-class organization which can be used both for progressive and reactionary purposes though it does describe the state as state of the whole bourgeoisie, but nevertheless capable of being peacefully transformed into a proletarian state. According to the CPI, the state in India today is controlled by the progressive wing of the Congress leadership which, if properly protected and backed, can play a progressive role and can, to a substantial extent, complete the bourgeois-democratic tasks, including the creation of a healthy, progressive agriculture built on a solid peasant base. According to the CPI, the task confronting the working class and the toiling people in general is to build a national democratic front, under the leadership of the progressive wing of the bourgeoisie, which will eliminate feudal-imperialist obstacles and to prevent the reactionary, pro-imperialist wing of the bourgeoisie from gaining control of the government and transforming Indian society into pro-

imperialist, feudal-bourgeois reactionary order. According to the CPI, the basic task before the Indian working class and the peasantry is to bring pressure on the progressive wing of the bourgeoisie, to make it realize its true interests, to compel it to execute the programmes which it proclaims and which is in the interest both of that section of the bourgeoisie and of the nation as a whole. The CPI leadership is, therefore, today engaged in the task of supporting this 'progressive wing' of the bourgeoisie, which, according to the CPI, is headed by Nehru, Krishna Menon, H. D. Malaviya and others, as against the reactionary wing of the bourgeoisie headed by S. K. Patil, Morarji Desai and others, and backed by even the Swatantra Party.

The CPI is, therefore, engaged in educating the progressive bourgeoisie concerning its real interests; in protecting them, on the one hand, from the attacks of the reactionary, pro-imperialist and pro-feudal wing of the bourgeoisie and, on the other, from the class struggles of the exploited strata; the latter, by discouraging the working class and the exploited and oppressed sections of the peasantry from precipitating movement on class lines which would endanger the position of the progressive wing of the bourgeoisie and thereby force it to join the reactionary wing, even though it is not in its own interest to do so. For the CPI, the task of the Indian working class is, not to assume the leadership of the agrarian proletariat and small peasants and neutralize the middle peasantry, and to strive for a gigantic class struggle both in urban and rural areas to end the bourgeois economy and regime, but to act as a ginger group, a pressure group organizing popular multi-class mass pressures on the progressive wing of the Indian bourgeoisie to force it to radicalize such of its programmes which are in its own interests and the interests of the nation as a whole. The fundamental objective of the CPI today is not socialist revolution, but the evolution of a National Democratic Front for completing the National Democratic Revolution. Its major strategy is to strengthen the position of the progressive bourgeoisie vis-a-vis the reactionary bourgeoisie and to organize the exploited strata, not on class lines for ending capitalism, but basically to regulate their discontent and ensure that its expression does not violate the limits of reformist pressure.

A logical conclusion from the CPI analysis of Indian social development, is its belief that the progressive wing of the Indian bourgeoisie, headed by Pandit Nehru and others, is engaged in

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building a progressive economic and social order which will be in the national interest. It holds that the progressive bourgeois leadership genuinely believes in what it proclaims as its objective viz, the evolution of socialistic pattern of society, and that it commits only errors in implementing its programmes. According to the CPI, this leadership is basically confused and, therefore, sometimes succumbs to the pressure of the reactionary, pro-imperialist and pro-feudal elements. It holds that the agrarian policy of the Indian bourgeoisie is a hotch-potch of contradictory elements reflecting the hotch-potch of views prevailing among the various groups in the present ruling party. The CPI is, therefore, as stated earlier, engaged in educating the progressive wing of the Indian bourgeoisie, by collaborating with it, and is engaged in channelising the mass discontent against the present social order into purely reformist forms of pressure movements to compel the progressive bourgeoisie to rectify its errors. It is also engaged in protecting the progressive wing of the Indian bourgeoisie from the inroads of the reactionary wing, which, according to the CPI, is pro-imperialist and pro-feudal. In short, the strategy of the CPI is to carry on an anti-feudal, anti-imperialist struggle on the basis of the united front of all progressive classes headed by the progressive wing of the bourgeoisie.

The CPI is not evolving a strategy wherein, under the leadership of the working class, the alliance of workers and peasants will launch irreconcilable class struggles for the overthrow of the present bourgeois structure itself and its replacement by a socialist system.

Disastrous Consequences of PSP, SP and CPI Analysis

As a result of these faulty, contradictory and inconsistent approaches, and as a result of wrong conceptions and programmes of struggles adopted by these three parties, the masses have been confused. The working class is split and scattered and the exploited and oppressed sections of the peasantry and the agrarian proletariat are forced to engage into varieties of multiclass, amorphous, futile inter-caste and other forms of struggles which confuse them and, objectively, strengthen the hold of the upper strata in the agrarian society.

The working class and the exploited and oppressed strata

of the peasantry, along with ruined lower middle-class sections and ruined artisans, are today being led into a blind alley. They are prevented from organizing themselves in class battalions to carry on their economic, political, social and cultural struggles against the bourgeoisie and its state on genuine class and anti-capitalist lines; their unity is being disrupted and, as a result of the faulty strategies of the three left parties, the astute and organizationally more competent bourgeoisie is being permitted ruthlessly to exploit and suppress. The policies of these three parties, while confusing the masses and preventing them from organizing themselves on genuine class lines, have given a classic opportunity to the Indian bourgeoisie to shape the political apparatus and social-institutional and cultural-ideological organizations into forms better suited to the intensive exploitation and ruthless subjugation of the masses, their systematic regulation and deception, and their utilization to serve bourgeois interest in an epoch which is historically unfavourable to the capitalist class.

It is, therefore, urgently necessary that genuine leaders of the exploited strata should adopt a new approach towards the strategy and tactics of the Indian bourgeoisie; one based on a new evaluation of the proclamations and practice of the Indian bourgeoisie and its state. The approaches of the PSP, SP and CPI require to be completely overhauled. The strategy and tactics of the struggles of the masses against the bourgeoisie should not be based on the assumption that the failure to achieve the proclaimed aims of the bourgeoisie (viz. improving the conditions of the masses) is due to lack of clarity or contradictions among sections of the bourgeoisie, but on the understanding that the bourgeoisie is primarily interested in profits, and only incidentally, if at all, in the masses. The strategy and tactics of the struggles of the masses should be based on the clear realization that the bourgeois Congress is achieving remarkable success in its basic goal, viz., to strengthen the Indian bourgeoisie, and that it has been successful in preventing the masses from conducting gigantic revolutionary struggles and in hindering them in organizing genuine militant class and anti-capitalist mass organizations that might obstruct its efforts on behalf of building a capitalist economic, political, social and cultural social order, which it is finding it difficult to do at a time which is most unfavourable to the world capitalist system. It is necessary for genuine

socialists to realize and clearly perceive that the Indian bourgeoisie has succeeded in its real intentions and has worked out, very astutely, a grand strategy of laying the foundations of Indian society on capitalist lines though within all the limitations inherent in the ex-colonial countries in the imperialist epoch. And this in spite of the limitations placed on it by its belated arrival on the historical scene in an epoch of colonial and socialist revolutions, when history has condemned the capitalist class, particularly in all underdeveloped countries, to an inability to complete the basic bourgeois-democratic tasks. It is further necessary for the genuine socialists to dispel the illusion that Indian bourgeoisie and its state are interested in improving the conditions of masses. It should be clearly understood that their primary interest is building a bourgeois-exploitative system, basically dedicated to upholding a social order which will generate higher and higher profits for the capitalists. It is interested only incidentally in the welfare of the masses, and that too only within the limits permissible in the framework of the capitalist social order.

The Agrarian Strategy of the Indian Bourgeoisie

We shall illustrate how the Indian bourgeoisie has been successful in achieving its major objectives (within the limitations provided by history) by illustrating from its agrarian strategy.

The Indian bourgeoisie has adopted fourfold programme to bring about changes in the agrarian society.

- (1) a reshuffling of the class structure of rural society;
- (2) the provision of facilities for the newly emerging rich peasant farmers and trading class for capital formation;
- (3) the evolution of adequate politico-economic-social organizations to strengthen the richer peasants and simultaneously stifle the class organisation of the exploited strata; and
- (4) the evolution of cultural media which will help the new rich in agrarian areas to acquire social and cultural control over the masses and prevent the masses from gaining a true understanding of their real problems.

Has not the bourgeois state succeeded in these objectives? As indicated by most of the students of land reforms.

like Thorner, Gadgil, Khusro, Desai, Kolhatkar, Baljit Singh and others, the Indian bourgeois state through land legislation, has transformed a large number of uneconomic farmers, operating as various categories of tenants, into agrarian proletariat. The Indian bourgeoisie has performed a miracle. In the name of land to tillers, it has, on the one hand, trimmed the wings of a section of the feudal landlords, and on the other, deprived a large majority of tenants of their tenancy protection, permitting a small section of rich peasantry to emerge as a powerful group, and hurling a vast mass of tenants into the ranks of the proletariat. As pointed out in a number of studies such large-scale expropriation of the peasantry of their tenancy rights has no parallel in recent history. The Indian bourgeoisie has successfully transformed Indian agrarian society into one composed of a small group of landlords and rich peasants, and vast armies of agrarian proletariat and pauperising peasants, with vast numbers of human derelicts — the unemployed or economically superfluous population.

With a view to strengthening this class of rich peasantry and landlords and orienting them towards making agriculture productive and profitable, the Indian bourgeoisie has provided extensive facilities like supply of seeds, fertilizers, improved tools, irrigation and better water supply, as well as facilities for credit and improved means of communication and transport. It has, further, evolved various kinds of organizations like co-operatives, land mortgage banks, marketing and purchasing societies, panchayats and others which primarily serve the rich peasants. The mammoth and costly set-up called the community development organisation was also evolved to serve the same purpose. The findings of various evaluation reports, as well as other rural surveys, have clearly indicated how all these measures are subserving the interests of the richer section of rural society, and how this section is induced and assisted to increase production, to secure greater profits and carry on capital formation. Herculean efforts are also being made by the Indian bourgeois state to increasingly divert rural savings and profits from consumption to investments in further production.

The Indian bourgeois state, as part of its agrarian strategy, is also elaborating varieties of multi-class economic, political and social institutions which, in the context of class polarisation in agrarian areas, are basically being used to enable

the richer sections to influence and control the rural population.

The co-operatives, the gram and nyaya panchayats, the educational youth, women's and other organisations, institutions like Vikas Mandals and welfare organizations which have been elaborated in the agrarian society are also associational forms which have been cleverly worked out by the Indian bourgeois state to provide powerful levers for the richer sections of the village communities to establish their control over the village poor and to provide necessary facilities to subserve the interests of these richer sections and thus further the basic interests of the Indian bourgeoisie as a whole. It is no accident that the Indian National Congress which, prior to independence, had sponsored Kisan Sabhas, landless labourers' organizations, and peasants, organisations, has, after coming to power, scrupulously avoided building up class organizations of landless labourers, tenants or small peasants. The systematic evolving of multi-class, non-class, formally democratic organizations in agrarian areas instead of class organisations of the exploited strata has succeeded in providing institutional instruments in the hands of the local rich. Further, the provision of political power to some of the institutions, like Panchayats and others, have successfully enabled the rich stratum to exploit and oppress the masses, and also to suppress the protest movements of these strata.

While these institutions provide adequate frameworks for rich peasants, landlords and trading bourgeoisie to strengthen themselves, they confuse the masses and divert them from elaborating class organizations and thereby sabotage the growth of class struggle at the very source, viz., village. These diversionary organizations are worked out methodically from village base upward to national level. This hierarchical structure has helped the village rich to have adequate links with their class brethren at taluka, district and state levels, and finally on an all-India scale. It has simultaneously jettisoned the village poor to pigeon-holes called the village community. The process has been climaxed by the creation of panchayats armed with political, administrative, fiscal, and penal powers. With the creation of panchayats, the Indian bourgeois state has evolved a powerful local instrument which gives the rural rich political power in every village to

extort unpaid services from the exploited strata, to coerce the poor, helpless peasantry and the landless labourers and the ruined artisans to perform unpaid, slave labour, to build up a local armed volunteer corps to tyrannize the poor and to curb and suppress class struggles at their source. They also prevent class organizations of the agrarian proletariat and poor peasants being formed. Thus, through panchayat organizations, the Indian bourgeois state has not merely smothered the class struggle and class organization in the village but has also attempted to prevent the development of class struggles and class organizations on the wider district, state and all-India levels. Through the medium of panchayati raj at the village level, the Indian bourgeoisie have huddled the village poor into the prisons called the village community, and created conditions under which they are subjected to ruthless exploitation and oppression and isolated from the poor strata of the other parts and their common class organizations.

In cultural field, the bourgeois leadership has started spreading religious and other poison among the masses. The bhajan mandlis, the spread of upper caste Hindu values, the organizations of mystical - magical rituals, ceremonials, celebrations on one hand, and sedulous propaganda through various agencies to develop discipline, to maintain peace, to accept the so-called agonies of transition and others, all subserve the same function — to prevent the masses from rising in revolt against the growing exploitation and oppression emerging under the bourgeois regime. All this propaganda eminently serve the class needs of the Indian bourgeoisie. This propaganda prevents the exploited strata from locating the real causes of their exploitation, confuses their perspectives, deludes them into wrong thinking and, by working as a dope, diverts them from organizing their revolts. making exploiters and oppressors safe. Increased profit, a higher standard of life, provision of better amenities and power to the rich and castration, sterilization in the name of family planning, increased exploitation and religious poison for the poor, these are the gifts of the Indian bourgeoisie. The Indian bourgeois state is certainly very effectively elaborating its economic, political, social and cultural instruments to subserve its basic needs.

Need for New Appraisal

Viewed as a whole, the Indian bourgeoisie has achieved

success in its agrarian strategy aimed at fostering and safeguarding its basic interests. Unless the socialist leadership realize the truth that the Indian bourgeoisie is eminently succeeding in its basic policy, and unless socialists elaborate their basic strategy to counteract the subtle, astute strategy of the Indian bourgeoisie, they will forsake their basic task, and will unconsciously become the tools of the Indian bourgeoisie.

A strategy based on a new appraisal of the policies of the Indian bourgeoisie has become urgent if the battle for socialism is to be launched and fought on right lines.

was to propagate the principles of Marxism, interpret Indian phenomenon from Marxist point of view and thereby help in evolving appropriate programmes of movements in India. He profusely contributed to Leftist papers and magazines during his long period. As a freelance Marxist writer, he contributed articles in various Indian journals and foreign magazines. C. G. Shah's study circles became famous. A number of youths who subsequently joined and some of whom even became active leaders of various Leftist parties in the country, attended his study circles.

C. G. Shah's political life can be divided into two distinct phases. The first phase lasted upto nearly 1937, when he was still recognised as one of the undisputed intellectual influences by all groups of Marxists. From 1937, particularly, after the full significance of Front Popular line was becoming clear and, also the inner bureaucratic structure of the C.P.I. was ossifying into a hard, monolithic, edifice, Shah became critical of Stalinism and the Bureaucratic stifling of Party organization. From 1937 onwards and more particularly after the C.P.I. supported British War Efforts in India when Soviet Union was attacked by German Nazi forces, Shah's critique of Stalinism, alienated him from the official C.P.I.

From 1941 onwards, C. G. Shah was isolated from the mainstream of Stalinist Communist Movement. However, his unflinching faith in Marxism, his systematic critique of stalinism, and his growing recognition of the profound truths inherent in and contributions of Trotsky, made him pioneer again of this critical Marxist Leninist Trotskyist current in the country. Though isolated from the main stream of organised Stalinist movement, he slowly emerged as a focal point and inspiration to a small and growing body of dedicated anti-Stalinist revolutionaries who were emerging in India. Particularly after the confusion and disillusionment created among the Marxists by Khrushchev's exposure of Stalin Era, Shah's intellectual influence grew and attracted a number of non-Stalinist and disillusioned Stalinist groups which were emerging in India.

Though isolated in his later life, he devoted his entire life to a cause and spread of ideas which he considered correct. He became one of the most systematic expounder of Trotskyist ideas, presented in the context of Indian developments.

C. G. Shah died in 1969 at the ripe age of 74, in harness, leaving a deep imprint of his ideas. His ideas are increasingly being recognized as authentic for evolving correct strategy and tactic for developing socialist revolution in India. C. G. Shah had many political opponents but no personal enemy.

C. G. Shah Memorial Trust is formed to continue to spread the ideas of authentic Marxism, for which he lived and died.

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